

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 228934

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ECWA, OCON, LW

SUBJECT: ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR WEST ASIA: THE UNDER-
SIDE OF THE FIFTH PLENARY SESSION

REF: A. BEIRUT 2394; B. BEIRUT 2274; C. STATE 092785

THIS IS A REPEAT OF BEIRUT'S 2449 DATED 29 APRIL 1978
SENT TO THE DEPT INFO USUN NEW YORK.

1. ECWA SECRETARY GENERAL DR. MOHAMED SAID AL-ATTAR
CALLED ON AMBASSADOR APRIL 27. IN COURSE OF GENERAL
REVIEW OF ECWA STATUS, HE DIGRESSED CONSIDERABLY BEYOND
SUBSTANCE RAOUF CONVERSATION REPORTED REF A CONCERNING
THE POSTPONED FIFTH PLENARY SESSION. POINTS OF INTEREST
FOLLOW.

2. HEADQUARTERS IN BAGHDAD: CHARACTERIZING PREVALENT
MOOD IN BAGHDAD AS "UN ESPRIT D'ESPION," ATTAR SUMMARIZED
LENGTHY EFFORTS BY LEBANESE AND OTHERS TO PREVENT TRANSFER
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OF ECWA PERMANENT HEADQUARTERS TO BAGHDAD, WHERE COMMISSION
MAY EXPECT IRAQI VETO OVER WHOM IT CAN HIRE LOCALLY AND
ONEROUS RESTRICTIONS ON TRAVEL OF PERSONNEL INTERNALLY AND
INTERNATIONALLY. IRAQ OFFERS NEITHER COMMUNICATIONS,
SERVICES, NOR MENTALITY CONDUCIVE TO ECWA'S PROPER

FUNCTIONING, BUT THE DIE IS CAST, IF AND WHEN BAGHDAD HEAD-

QUARTERS BUILDINGS ARE COMPLETED, NOW FORECAST FOR LATE 1979, ECWA WILL LEAVE BEIRUT, UNLESS IN MEANTIME SOME DEUS EX MACHINA INTERVENES.

3. PLO: AFTER DISCOURSE ON JURIDICAL ANOMALY INHERENT IN HAVING A NON-STATE ENTITY GAIN FULL MEMBERSHIP IN ECWA, ATTAR NOTED WITH A SHRUG THAT ECOSOC RULES WHICH ENTRUST TOTAL POWER OVER MEMBERSHIP TO RECOMMENDATION OF 12 ORIGINAL MEMBER STATES (IN ORDER EXCLUDE CERTAIN PARTIES), LEFT NO MEANS OF PREVENTING MEMBERS FROM VOTING TO RECOMMEND RAISING PLO FROM PERMANENT OBSERVER TO MEMBER STATUS. IN 1977 THEY HAD DONE SO, AND THE RESULT HAS BEEN A HOST OF NEW PROBLEMS.

4. AS FULL MEMBER, PLO HAS RIGHT TO REQUEST CERTAIN STUDIES BE CARRIED OUT ON ITS BEHALF SIMILAR TO STUDIES ECWA UNDERTAKES FOR BENEFIT OF MEMBER STATES. PLO HAD PROPOSED TWO STUDIES: (A) A CENSUS OF THE PALESTINIAN POPULATION, AND (B) A STUDY OF "ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL POTENTIAL OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE." LATTER WAS TO BE STRUCTURED ON FOUR ALTERNATIVE HYPOTHESES: (1) THE STATUS QUO, (2) A WEST BANK AND GAZA ENTITY, (3) A FEDERATION WITH JORDAN, AND (4) A SECULAR AND DEMOCRATIC STATE IN PALESTINE. ATTAR DID NOT KNOW WHERE TO BEGIN DESCRIBING THE DIFFICULTIES THESE STUDIES POSED: THE INHERENT PROBLEM OF CONDUCTING THEM WITHIN TERRITORIES OF

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MEMBER STATES WHO MIGHT NOT WELCOME EVEN THE CENSUS, LET ALONE THE RESEARCH INTO PALESTINIAN POTENTIAL; FAILURE OF INTERNATIONAL PROFESSORS WHOM ECWA HAD CANVASSED TO RESPOND POSITIVELY TO THE PROJECT; PLO INSISTENCE ON VETO OVER PERSONNEL INVITED OR ASSIGNED TO PROJECT, AND PLO INSISTENCE ON CONTROL OF PROJECT TERMS OF REFERENCE. ALTHOUGH NOT SHOWN ON THE PUBLISHED AGENDA, PLO STUDIES WERE TO HAVE BEEN PRINCIPAL ITEM OF DISCUSSION ON FIFTH SESSION'S SUB ROSA AGENDA. SPECIFICALLY, DECISIONS WERE TO HAVE BEEN SOUGHT ON WHETHER OR NOT TO PROCEED AT AITH THEM (SENSING ARAB MEMBER STATE RELUCTANCE TO PROCEED, THE PLO ITSELF WAS EXPECTED TO PROPOSE A DELAY IN LAUNCHING THE STUDIES) AND ON DESIGNATING A "CONSULTANT" TO ORGANIZE THE PROJECT. DISCUSSION OF THESE MATTERS WAS TO HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN CLOSED SESSION.

5. US HELP. ATTAR ASKED FOR GREATER WORKING CONTACT WITH EMBASSY AND US SUPPORT FOR ECWA PROJECTS, CITING PAUCITY OF UN BUDGET. AMBASSADOR PARRIED THIS COURTEOUSLY WITH PROMISE TO EXAMINE ECWA MATERIALS ATTAR HAD BROUGHT WITH HIM.

6. SECURITY. AS REPORTED REFTTEL, LOCAL SECURITY SITUATION IS TO BLAME FOR FIFTH PLENARY POSTPONEMENT; ECWA HAD CONSULTED LOCAL ARAB AMBASSADORS, SOME OF WHOM HAD MADE CLEAR THAT THEIR MINISTERS WOULD NOT BE AVAILABLE TO ATTEND MEETING IN BEIRUT AT THIS TIME. IN ATTAR'S WORDS, "WE MUST SEE WHAT THE SUMMER BRINGS." CHRISTOPHER

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